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SUBJECT: ISN ACTING A/S MCNERNEY'S MEETING WITH PLA LTG  
ZHANG QINSHENG

REF: A. BEIJING 2322  
[1](#)B. STATE 1264  
[1](#)C. BEIJING 1675  
[1](#)D. BEIJING 5362

Classified By: ISN Acting A/S Patricia McNerney, Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

#### Summary

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[1](#)1. (S) In the first-ever meeting between the International Security and Nonproliferation (ISN) bureau and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Commander of the Guangzhou Military Region, ISN Acting Assistant Secretary Patricia McNerney met with Lieutenant General Zhang Qinsheng on July 14. Discussion included China's military modernization, January 2007 anti-satellite (ASAT) test, transparency, China's nuclear policy, Taiwan, arms sales, nonproliferation and disarmament, and the status of the Six-Party Talks. LTG Zhang acknowledged positive signs in cross-Straits relations, but reiterated standard talking points on China's military modernization, transparency, No First Use (NFU) of nuclear weapons, and the ASAT test. Thanking the U.S. for its contribution to the Six-Party Talks, he expressed great optimism that the DPRK would implement its commitment in accordance with the 2005 Joint Declaration, noting the DPRK's economic difficulties and offering that the regime will have to take into account the opinion of the international community.<sup>8</sup> Though McNerney opened the meeting by noting that the U.S. was pleased with the recent resumption of the U.S.-China Security Dialogue, this was the one issue for which LTG Zhang did not provide a response; it is unclear whether he was aware of the June 4 meeting between Assistant Foreign Minister He and Acting Under Secretary John Rood. While Military Region commanders typically do not visit Washington to meet with senior Administration officials, LTG Zhang's visit was arranged as a courtesy in recognition of his contribution to bilateral military ties, and his potential as an influential national-level military leader. LTG Zhang's schedule also included office calls with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security James Shinn and National Security Council Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Dennis Wilder. End summary.

#### Military Modernization

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[1](#)2. (S) Responding to McNerney's call for China to improve transparency on its military modernization efforts, LTG Zhang stated that China's military development was in keeping with the changing times and objective law.<sup>8</sup> Likening China's military modernization to a running river, LTG Zhang asserted that China's military development would keep running and will never stop.<sup>8</sup> Citing wars with Korea, India, and Vietnam as examples of China's tumultuous history of armed conflict and external threats, he explained that the military's mission is to deter war, and if necessary, to defeat the enemy.<sup>8</sup> As China must modernize its forces in order to possess the capabilities necessary to safeguard national interests and to protect the Chinese people, LTG Zhang stated that China will continue to enhance its military

development. McNerney responded that, while the U.S. recognizes that China, like the U.S. and many other nations, will continue to modernize its military, the key issue is for China to do so in a more visible and transparent manner to provide greater understanding and avoid potentially dangerous situations in which the U.S. and China misinterpret one another's policies or actions. Citing perceived risks posed by Taiwan independence forces as well as ethnic tensions, extremism, and terrorism, LTG Zhang stated that China will always abide by a military strategy of active defense,<sup>8</sup> but will never pose a threat to others with our military development.<sup>8</sup> He further added that China would continue its policy of peaceful development and seek a mutually strategically beneficial win-win<sup>8</sup> situation to promote a peaceful and stable international environment.

#### Transparency

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¶3. (S) Regarding frequent U.S. calls for increased transparency, LTG Zhang indicated that he took the lead in elaborating on the concept of transparency in China's 2007 Defense White Paper, and argued that transparency is not an absolute notion, but a limited one. Asserting that strategic trust is a precondition for transparency, LTG Zhang asserted that transparency can be achieved through exchanges, dialogue, and cooperation. He cited the June 2006 Defense Consultative Talks (DCTs) with then-Assistant Secretary for Defense Peter Rodman in June 2006 as a good example, highlighting that he had briefed the U.S. side on China's military budget and approval process, military strategy, and nuclear strategy and doctrine in a session lasting over ten hours. McNerney and LTG Zhang agreed that transparency is a continual process.

#### ASAT

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¶4. (S) Responding to McNerney's articulation of U.S. concerns about China's unannounced January 2007 ASAT test and the risk to spaceflight posed by the resulting debris, LTG Zhang repeated China's claim that the test was a scientific experiment, and that China had no plans to conduct an ASAT test in the near future.<sup>8</sup> (Note: This was a significant walk-back<sup>8</sup> from the assurance AFM He provided to AU/S Rood in June during the Security Dialogue (ref A), in which AFM He stated that China would not conduct any further ASAT tests.<sup>8</sup> End note.) Referring to his participation in the tracking and controlling of debris, LTG Zhang asserted that the resulting debris was very limited (only over 100 pieces), and had not collided with any satellites. He also repeated China's claim that the U.S. and Russia are responsible for the majority of debris in space, and reminded that the U.S. and Russia conducted ASAT tests prior to China doing so. (Note: These claims contradict information the U.S. has provided to China following the ASAT test (refs A and B). End note.)

#### Nuclear Policy

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¶5. (S) Calling any concerns about China's nuclear doctrine and strategy absolutely unnecessary,<sup>8</sup> LTG Zhang reiterated China's policy of NFU against any nuclear country, no threat of nuclear use against any non-nuclear country, and no unauthorized launch of a nuclear weapon. He repeated China's claim that their nuclear doctrine and strategy was centered upon the ability to execute a counterattack.

#### Disarmament

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¶6. (S) Noting that the U.S. has been decreasing the size of its nuclear arsenal for some time, McNerney highlighted that

the U.S. has not produced fissile materials in many years, and is actually in the process of downgrading highly-enriched uranium to low-enriched uranium for civilian use. Referring to the trend toward disarmament by states party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, McNerney asked for China,s support on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty within the Conference on Disarmament.

#### Taiwan

17. (S) While acknowledging positive signs in cross-Strait relations, LTG Zhang noted the &very fragile8 foundations of the new Ma government and the uncertainty of Taiwan,s future political development. He reiterated China,s long-standing policy on Taiwan: that the island is an unalienable part/territory of China; that China stands by its &one country, two systems8 approach; and that China opposes independence in any form, or interference by &a third country.8 He assessed that the positive trend in relations was due to (former President) Chen Shui-bian leaving office; the &right strategic choice by the Taiwan people8 in electing Ma Ying-jeou; the impact of &peaceful forces,8 including the U.S.; and China,s consistent opposition to independence and &enhancement of military readiness.8 LTG Zhang pledged that China will take the opportunity to maintain peace and stability across the Strait, and are dedicated to a peaceful reunification process, in which China will be victorious given Beijing,s &aggressive posture8 in non-military areas and &fully prepared military.8

#### Arms Sales

18. (S) Noting that there has recently been some reduction in China,s arms sales to Iran, McNerney expressed the U.S. hope that this was not a temporary move by Beijing leading up to the opening of the Olympic Games, but rather a long-term trend, particularly given that Iran is under UN sanctions and has demonstrated its unreliability in verifying the validity of its purported end-users. Emphasizing the very real dangers posed by Iranian-supplied arms to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, McNerney urged China, in keeping with its role as a responsible stakeholder, to cease its arms sales to Iran and continue cooperating with the U.S. to prevent further proliferation of Chinese conventional arms to problematic regimes. Countering that China,s arms sales to Iran were &very limited8 and &did not violate international agreements or practice,8 LTG Zhang asserted that the recent reduction in arms sales was due to China &honoring its commitment.8 (Note: This statement likely refers to China,s March 2007 commitment to the U.S. to voluntarily suspend &many8 arms shipments to Iran (ref C). End note.) LTG Zhang assured McNerney that China would &never support war or irresponsibly expand arms sales8 merely for Chinese interests, nor would China &do anything harmful to U.S. interests because cooperating with the U.S. is the strategic choice of China and the Chinese people.8

#### North Korea

19. (S) Noting her recent return from the Six-Party Talks in Beijing, McNerney solicited LTG Zhang,s views on North Korea,s nuclear posture, and whether Pyongyang would take the next steps in the denuclearization process. Citing the regime,s isolation and deteriorating living conditions, as well as the work the U.S. and China had put into the Six-Party process, LTG Zhang assessed that the DPRK will implement its commitments according to the 2005 Joint Declaration and &will have to take into account the opinion of the international community.8 Referring to the DPRK,s &very unique and special way of thinking,8 he offered that the ultimate question was whether the DPRK,s interests could be met. Stating that &China did not side with the DPRK,8

LTG Zhang emphasized several times that the &very close8 historical relationship between China and the DPRK is now merely a &normal one.8 McNerney underscored the importance of China,s cooperation on stemming DPRK proliferation, adding that the U.S. found news of the DPRK,s cooperation with Syria on nuclear reactors &very troubling.8 Citing DPRK proliferation concerns raised during previous rounds of the U.S.-China Nonproliferation Dialogue (ref D), McNerney made clear that Pyongyang not only needed to fulfill its Six-Party Talks commitments to improve its international image, but also that the regime must cease its proliferation to Iran, Syria, and others.

#### Participants

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#### United States

Patricia A. McNerney, Acting Assistant Secretary,  
International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau  
Mary Alice Hayward, Deputy Assistant Secretary, International  
Security and Nonproliferation Bureau  
Bridget McGovern, Special Advisor, International Security and  
Nonproliferation Bureau  
Robert Gromoll, Senior Advisor, Office of Regional Affairs,  
International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau  
Col. Mark Gilette, Defense Attache Office, Embassy Beijing  
(escort)  
Thy Nguyen, Foreign Affairs Officer, Office of Regional  
Affairs, International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau  
(notetaker)  
Michael Yan (interpreter)

#### China

Lt. Gen. Zhang Qinsheng, Commander, Guangzhou Military  
Region, PLA  
Lt. Gen. Wang Hongguang, Deputy Commander, Nanjing Military  
Region, PLA  
Maj. Gen. Xu Fenlin, Chief of Staff, Guangzhou Military  
Region, PLA  
Maj. Gen. Zhao Ning, Defense Attache, Chinese Embassy  
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RICE

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End Cable Text